

CHARLOTTE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Premier Inc. to move HQ to Charlotte

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Premier Inc. is making Charlotte its corporate home, moving its headquarters from San Diego and adding 300 jobs here over the next five years.

Premier, the largest health-care alliance in the country, currently employs 750 in Charlotte.

The move was announced at a 3 p.m. press conference at Premier's current Charlotte office in LakePointe Corporate Center.

The decision will bring the bulk of Premier's employees together under one roof. Premier also has 500 workers in San Diego, Philadelphia and Washington.

Says Susan DeVore, chief executive of Premier: "We need speed to execution. We need innovation. We need teamwork. That's all enabled by people working in offices in one building."

Bob Morgan, president of the **Charlotte Chamber**, says the headquarters announcement is "huge" for the city and the diversification of its economy.

Local leaders have been working to recruit energy companies and position the region as an "energy cluster," and Premier's decision could be an important step in doing the same thing in the health-care sector, Morgan says.

"We'd like to build a similar focus on the attraction of health-care jobs," he says.

N.C. Deputy Commerce Secretary Dale Carroll confirmed that North Carolina's Economic Investment Committee approved a Job Development Investment Grant earlier Wednesday to support Premier's move and its plans for growth.

Incentives are expected to range as high as \$4.9 million if Premier adds the planned 300 jobs in Charlotte over the next five years, as well as maintaining the positions already here.

"That just helped us make the economic decision make sense," DeVore says of the incentives. "They helped us have the ability to get those 300 jobs here and have the space to accommodate them."

Premier also may receive incentives at the city and county level, says Jennifer Roberts, chairwoman of the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners. A vote is scheduled for early next month.

"They would get the grant after they've made the investment and created the jobs," she says.

On average, Premier's new employees will be paid \$62,460 per year.

Charlotte already was home to Premier's three main divisions: Premier Purchasing Partners, Premier Healthcare Informatics and Premier Consulting Services. DeVore expects double-digit growth in the company's informatics and consulting operations.

The headquarters relocation will be accompanied by a significant investment in new office facilities.

DeVore says the company intends to lease all 10 stories of the Boyle Building, a 262,500-square-foot office tower completed earlier this year in Ballantyne Corporate Center.

The company will have a 15-year lease.

“This has been very much an employee-driven decision,” DeVore says.

Premier had previously narrowed its office-space search to three options: expanding in LakePointe Corporate Center, its current local home off Tyvola Road; moving to Ballantyne Corporate Park; or relocating to the 201 North Tryon office tower, formerly known as the IJL Financial Center.

The health-care alliance collected input from its employees, allowing them to vote on which facility they preferred, DeVore says. Of those votes, 72 percent listed Ballantyne as their first or second choice, citing factors such as convenient interstate access, security and day care.

The Ballantyne location should help Premier’s efforts to recruit and retain new talent, DeVore says.

Premier now begins the planning and design process, working on configuring the space for its needs, DeVore says. Plans also call for upgrading the health alliance’s tech center.

It is slated to start moving employees and computer servers to the new headquarters in late fall 2010 and complete the relocation by the end of February 2011.

Blair Bryan, Jeff Harper and Eric Parris of **Jones Lang LaSalle** represented Premier in lease negotiations with building owner **Bissell Cos.**, which was represented by Ned Curran and Barry Fabyan.

The chamber worked closely with Premier over the past 18 months to facilitate the project. The N.C. Department of Commerce, Mecklenburg County and the city of Charlotte also played key roles and provided critical support.

The health-care alliance represents 2,200 nonprofit hospitals in the United States. That amounts to about 40 percent of such facilities nationwide and includes Carolinas HealthCare System, Gaston Memorial Hospital and Stanly Regional Medical Center.

Premier generated revenue of \$486 million in fiscal 2008. It expects double-digit annual revenue growth in the coming years.

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